The Mafia's Ties in Convention City

By Jack Anderson

MIAMI BEACH—While the Democrats have declared their unrelenting opposition to organized crime, they have been boozing, bathing and babeing at Miami Beach hostelries linked to the Mafia.

The Republicans, operating out of the same hotels next month, are expected to take an equally strong stand against the underworld, despite records tying their hosts to organized crime.

Two Justice Department strike forces, meanwhile, are investigating Mafia chieftains who have invested in Miami Beach's glittering hotels and other enterprises.

One unit works directly out of Miami on organized crime. The other, the mysterious Strike Force 18, operates out of Washington. Its racketbusters include not only Mafia experts but tax and securities specialists who are investigating highly complex securities crimes, real estate frauds and corporate swindling.

Our sources on the strike forces say every Mafia "family" has representatives in the Miami area. They are attracted here largely by the narcotics trade. The federal crackdown on the traditional Marseilles-New York smuggling route has caused the Mafia drug traffickers to open new routes through the Caribbean. Miami is now the main control point.

It's no secret that crime lords and their reputed associates have a penchant for the luxury hotel business. Records show, for example, that the fabulous Eden Roc and Deauville are partly owned by Sam Cohen and Morris Lansburgh who are awaiting trial in an organized crime case.

The government charges that the two fomous innkeepers pplotted with Mafia hoodlum Meyer Lansky to skim $14 million from the gambling take of a Las Vegas casino.

These criminal charges, however, haven't stopped the Democrats from using both the Deauville and Eden Roc as convention centers. The TV fund-raising spectacular was held at the Deauville. The youth and women's caucuses were scheduled there—although the women's event was canceled. Reps. Wilbur Mills and Shirley Chisholm set up their presidential headquarters there. And the convention issued press credentials out of the Eden Roc.

Old Story

Both Democratic and Republican leaders should have known about mob influence in the beach hotels. The Miami Herald exposed the infiltration as far back as 1967. Florida state authorities moved in 1969 to throw out the management of 19 hotels on grounds they were "directly or indirectly connected with... criminal societies...and are Mafia controlled."

Yet my associate Les Whitten found the same management in at least 10 of the accused hotels. Spokesmen for each hotel denied any mob ties.

Sam Cohen and Morris Lansburgh refused all comment. But both have previously denied the criminal charges against them. Their offices acknowledged that Cohen is owner of the Deauville and part owner of the Eden Roc. Lansburgh operates the Deauville and Saxony, is part owner of the Eden Roc and Versailles.

John Tweedle, part owner of the Hawaiian Isle and other beach hostelries, conceded that ex-bootlegger Yiddie Bloom had a first mortgage on the Hawaiian Isle. "I got the hotel from Bloom and his associates, and they retained a mortgage on it," explained Tweedle. But he insisted that the Minneapolis crime figure has no voice in its management.

The dazzling Aztec Motel and its sister hotel, the Kimberly, were identified by Florida authorities as crime-connected. Meyer Lansky's brother Jake is known to be a stockholder.

Bernie Bercuson, an executive of the Aztec-Kimberly complex, said Lansky has no control over the hotels. Bercuson also happens to be an executive of the famous Singapore Motel where the old gambling master himself, Meyer Lansky, held court before he skipped the country.

A former state rackets investigator, Charles Kimball, estimated for us that at least 40 Miami Beach hotels have varying degrees of mob influence. And the two strike forces have gathered evidence that the mobster-businessmen use strong-arm tactics and illegal methods in their business dealings.

Democratic Doings

Busing Story—A Mississippi delegate came to Charles Evers, the Mississippi black leader, with a $1,700 offer from the McGovern forces to pay the bus fare of his poor but proud delegation, Evers told us. "We've been begging peanuts all these years," Evers advised the delegates, "and we aren't beholden to anyone—not to George McGovern, Hubert Humphrey or Shirley Chisholm, either. We'll pay our own way." McGovern aides denied that the national organization had offered Evers any money. They said the offer, if it was made, must have come from overzealous local McGovern supporters.

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